

Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 DODE-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 ACDA-19 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15

COA-02 DLOS-07 DRC-01 /109 W
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R 060345Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4706

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 4369

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, KS, KN

SUBJ: BOAT INCIDENTS ROUSE ROK FRUSTRATIONS

REF: A. COMUSNAVFORK 021245Z B. COMUSNAVFORK 030025Z

1. ACCORDING TO JULY 3 AND 4 PRESS REPORTS IN ALL PAPERS, BOAT THAT WAS SIGHTED BY ROK NAVAL PATROL CRAFT NEAR PUSAN EVENING JULY 2 AND WHICH FIRED ON ROK VESSEL, (RETELS) TURNED OUT TO BE NORTH

KOREAN "SPY" SHIP. ACCORDING TO PRESS, ARMY MAJ. GEN. KIM YOUNG-SON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE ROK COUNTERINFILTRATION OPERATIONS COMMAND, ANNOUNCED THAT THE NORTH KOREAN ESPIONAGE BOAT WAS SUNK, AFTER DEFYING THE ROK PATROL CRAFT'S CHALLENGE AND AN EXCHANGE OF FIRE IN WHICH ONE ROK SAILOR WAS KILLED AND THREE WERE WOUNDED. MAJ. GEN. KIM IS QUOTED AS SAYING: QUOTE ONE PATROL BOAT CHASED THE SPEEDING SHIP TO A SPOT ABOUT 20 MILES SOUTH OF THE ISLAND (SONG-DO) AND SANK IT IN A FIRING ATTACK UNQUOTE.

2. IN SEPARATE UNRELATED STORIES ON JULY 3, PRESS FRONT-PAGED HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE DISCUSSION OF THE EARLIER KNMP JUNE 28 BOAT MISHAP NEAR THE MDL EXTENSION ON THE EAST COAST OF SOUTH KOREA. PAPERS PROMINENTLY REPORTED YUJONGHOE REPRESENTATIVE CHUNG JAE HO'S STATEMENT THAT IT WAS "NOT DUE TO BAD WEATHER, BUT THE US RESTRAI-
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NT THAT WE (ROKG) WERE NOT ABLE TO COUNTER THE NORTH KOREAN

ATTACK." CHUNG ARGUED IN A HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MEETING WITH GOVT OFFICIALS THAT SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE TO ALTER THE COMMAND CHANNEL WHEREBY THE ROK NAVY WAS PUT UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE US MILITARY, "A SYSTEM WHICH MAKES PROMPT COUNTERATTACK ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE."

3. COMMENT: BOTH STORIES, IN DIFFERENT WAYS, REFLECT GROWING ROK FRUSTRATIONS OVER THEIR APPARENT INABILITY TO DEAL AS EFFECTIVELY AS THEY WOULD LIKE WITH SEA INCIDENTS.

4. NEWS ACCOUNTS OF "SINKING" OF NORTH KOREAN "SPY CRAFT" ARE NOT SUBSTANTIATED BY FACTS AS GIVEN TO US THROUGH OFFICIAL CHANNELS AND REPORTED REFTELS, AND TO HAVE BEEN MANUFACTURED IN EFFORT TO MEET PUBLIC CONCERNS AND/OR HIGH-LEVEL INTERNAL ROKG DEMANDS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE COUNTERACTIONS. IN HIS REPORT TO COMMANDER NAVAL FORCES KOREA ON PUSAN INCIDENT, ROK FLEET COMMANDER AGREED THAT SOME POSSIBILITY EXISTED THAT UNIDENTIFIED BOAT WAS SMUGGLER RATHER THAN NORTH KOREAN AND THAT WHILE ROK NAVY CRAFT HAD EMPTIED A 20MM DRUM INTO UNIDENTIFIED BOAT AT CLOSE RANGE, ROK NAVY PERSONNEL ON SCENE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER IT SANK. SUBSEQUENT SEARCH BY ROK NAVAL BOATS AND ROK AIRCRAFT FAILED TO TURN UP ANY CLUES. INCIDENTALLY, IN COURSE OF SEARCH ONE ROK C-46 CRASHED AND CREW WAS LOST. CRASH WAS REPORTED BY PRESS, BUT PRESUMABLY TO AVOID FURTHER EMBARRASSMENT WAS NOT TIED INTO STORY ON SEARCH FOR MISSING "SPY" BOAT.

5. REPRESENTATIVE CHUNG JAE HO'S REMARKS ON OPGON DO NOT REFLECT ROK NAVY VIEWS, NOR OTHER MND OFFICIAL VIEWS AS FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ESPIONAGE, SHIPS, INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, KIA, PRESS COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SEOUL04369
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740179-0893
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740770/aaaaciep.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A. COMUSNAVFORK 021245Z B. COMUSNAVF, ORK 030025Z
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 JUL 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <25 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BOAT INCIDENTS ROUSE ROK FRUSTRATIONS
TAGS: MOPS, KS, KN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005